

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:TH
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO FLASH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV FLASH
INFO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 216025 TOSEC 250005

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, EG, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI ACTION AGAINST AMOCO RIG

REF: CAIRO 11702

1. FOR TEL AVIV: AMBASSADOR SHOULD GET IN TOUCH URGENTLY
WITH SENIOR LEVEL IN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, DESCRIBE THE
SITUATION REPORTED BY THE CAIRO REFTEL, AND DEMAND THAT THE
ISRAELIS HOLD OFF ON TAKING ANY ACTION AGAINST THE
AMOCO RIG. SAY THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ISRAELI
POSITION DIFFERS FROM OURS AS TO THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE
TERRITORY IN QUESTION AND THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE TOLD US
THEY ARE UNWILLING TO APPEAR TO BE ABANDONING THEIR STANCE.
IT IS NONETHELESS A BASICALLY LEGAL DISPUTE, AND IT WOULD
BE ABSURD IN THE EXTREME TO ESCALATE IT TO A SHOOTING
INCIDENT. WE WOULD FIND IT PARTICULARLY UNACCEPTABLE FOR
THE ISRAELIS TO ENDANGER AMERICAN LIVES, AND PERHAPS KILL
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OR WOUND AMERICANS, IN TRYING TO MAKE THEIR LEGAL POINT.

IN A PRACTICAL SENSE, IN ADDITION, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE DRILLING RIG WOULD BE UNABLE TO GET UNDERWAY WITHIN THE TIME SET BY THE ISRAELI ULTIMATUM.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAVE SENT GUNBOATS TO PROTECT THE AMOCO RIG, AND WE ARE URGING THE EGYPTIAN

GOVERNMENT TO PULL THEM BACK WITH THE SAME OBJECTIVE OF AVOIDING A SHOOTING INCIDENT.

3. WITH RESPECT TO THE GENERAL QUESTION OF AMOCO'S DRILLING RIGHTS IN THE GULF, WE ARE STILL CONSIDERING THE MATTER ON OUR SIDE. WE WILL BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH THE ISRAELIS ON THIS BASIC ISSUE, BUT IF THE ISRAELIS MEANWHILE USE FORCE AGAINST THE DRILLING RIG WE WILL OBVIOUSLY BE DEALING WITH AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT KIND OF QUESTION.

4. YOU SHOULD ADD THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY CONVEYED TO AMBASSADOR DINITZ ITS INSISTENCE THAT THE ISRAELIS REMOVE THE ULTIMATUM AND HAS INFORMED DINITZ THAT WE WILL THEN BE IN TOUCH WITH THE ISRAELIS ABOUT THE BASIC ISSUES INVOLVED.

5. FOR CAIRO: YOU SHOULD TELL THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT, AT A SUFFICIENTLY HIGH LEVEL, THAT, AS THEY HAVE REQUESTED, WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN EXCHANGES WITH THE ISRAELIS ABOUT THE LEGAL ISSUE OF AMOCO'S DRILLING RIGHTS IN THE GULF, AND WE ARE NOW GOING URGENTLY TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO INSIST THEY DESIST FROM THE USE OF FORCE WITH RESPECT TO THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE THAT HAS ARISEN.

6. WE REALIZE THAT THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT BELIEVES IT IS IN THE RIGHT AND WE OURSELVES AGREE THAT AMOCO IS WITHIN ITS RIGHTS TO DRILL ON THAT SITE. FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, THE OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION MUST BE THE AVOIDANCE OF A SHOOTING INCIDENT. NOT ONLY WOULD WE CONSIDER IT UNACCEPTABLE THAT AMERICANS SHOULD BE JEOPARDIZED, WOUNDED OR KILLED IN SUCH AN INCIDENT, BUT THE POLITICAL COSTS IN TERMS OF THE SINAI II AGREEMENT AND ALL OF ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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RAMIFICATIONS WOULD IN OUR VIEW FAR OUTWEIGH THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEGAL ISSUE INVOLVED.

7. IN THE INTERESTS OF AVOIDING A SHOOTING INCIDENT, WE BELIEVE THE EGYPTIANS SHOULD PULL BACK THEIR GUNBOATS, JUST AS WE HAVE ASKED THE ISRAELIS NOT TO USE FORCE ON THEIR SIDE. MEANWHILE, WE ALSO BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT AMOCO SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO EVACUATE ITS PERSONNEL IF

IT WISHES TO DO SO. NOTHING WILL BE SETTLED AND THERE
WOULD BE IN FACT FAR MORE TROUBLE FOR ALL OF US IF THE
PERSONNEL ARE KEPT ON BOARD AND THIS INCIDENT IS PUSHED
TO THE POINT OF CONFLICT.

8. THE EGYPTIANS MAY BE SURE THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO
PRESS THE ISRAELIS ON THE LEGAL ISSUE INVOLVED. ROBINSON

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